

YOUR AMERICAN WEST

PARKS

Animated Ambassadors
Whiskeytown's Recovery
B.A.R.K. in the Park!

EVENTS

Creatures of the
Night Campfire
Evening of Lights
at Aztec Ruins

PRODUCTS

Love + Protect Your Parks
Collection



Evening of Lights at Aztec Ruins National Monument (courtesy of NPS). [See page 15 for more.](#)

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Details

Western National Parks Association (WNPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, serving more than 70 national parks in the western United States.

The Home Office and The National Parks Store are located at 12880 N Vistoso Village Drive, Tucson, AZ 85755. Learn more by contacting info@wnpa.org or visiting www.wnpa.org.

All photographs courtesy of WNPA unless otherwise credited.

Cover: Chaco Culture National Historical Park, New Mexico (Scott_Walton/iStock).

Letter from the Chief Executive Officer



National parks are more than places which preserve parts of our past. National parks are places we must conserve. Every day the staff and volunteers at **Western National Parks Association** (WNPA) work toward one simple goal: create advocates who want to preserve and protect these special places for everyone, for all time. This is at the heart of our Love + Protect campaign, launched after the 2018–2019 government shutdown as a reminder that national parks protect our nation’s culture, nature, and history, and we must protect them in return.

WNPA and the National Park Service (NPS) would not be able to protect these places without our volunteers. The Volunteers in Parks Act celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019, meaning Volunteers in Parks (VIPs) have helped with interpretation and other visitor services in national parks for 50 years. No one exemplifies the principles of Love + Protect more than these VIPs, without whom the NPS could not fully execute extraordinary conservation programs like those performed by the Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery at **Padre Island National Seashore**.

But you don’t need to be a VIP to be a powerful national park advocate. You can love and protect your parks in many ways, from attending a book launch event for **Channel Islands National Park** to taking a selfie with Carl S. Bat at **Carlsbad Caverns National Park**. Attending events and posting on social media are simple ways to show your love for national parks and encourage others to do the same. Protecting parks can be as easy as keeping your pet on a leash while on a hike, as taught in B.A.R.K. Ranger programs like the one at **Pecos National Historical Park**, or carefully stepping over ants on the ground at **Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument**.

There are even ways to show your love if you aren’t able to visit a national park. Recycling, carpooling or taking public transit, using canvas shopping bags, and buying a reusable water bottle are all simple ways to reduce your everyday impact on the areas we strive to preserve. And if that reusable water bottle is purchased from a dedicated NPS partner like WNPA, even better, because every purchase from WNPA supports parks.

In the coming weeks we will be sending out more information about our [Love + Protect campaign](#) and the many ways you can help WNPA support national parks. In the meantime, we hope you will take your own steps to love and protect your parks.

Sincerely,

James E. Cook
Chief Executive Officer



The Ants Go Marching On

30 Years of *Atta mexicana* in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

By Naomi Pier, graduate student of entomology and insect science at the University of Arizona

It was mid-October, and it was still hot in the Sonoran Desert. The land was beyond parched. The creosote leaves looked crispy, as if they hadn't had a good drink of water in ages.

The leafcutter ants *Atta mexicana*, however, seemed to be doing fine in the dry conditions. It was too warm for foraging, but the occasional soldier—large, formidable, almost three quarters of an inch long—patrolled the tunnel entrances to their nests.

A. mexicana are found from El Salvador to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in southwestern Arizona, on the border with Mexico. *A. mexicana* are “living on the edge of their range at Organ Pipe,” said Dr. Alex Mintzer, the researcher studying these leafcutter ants in the monument. His work is funded by the Western National Parks Association.

A. mexicana live at the mercy of their unforgiving desert environment, a place where rain seldom falls. The desert shrubs and trees that the ants rely on are stretched to their limit, relying on the water they had saved during the limited summer monsoons.

But “the ants are pretty adaptable,” Mintzer said. They live along desert washes, leaving their massive nests in the cooler hours to collect leaves to cultivate the fungus that is necessary for their survival.

Leafcutter ants construct deep nests with intricate tunnels and chambers, where they take the leaves from creosotes and palo verde trees and chew them into a paste on which they grow the fungus. Each caste in the ant colony has a role. Some workers cultivate the fungus gardens, while others tend to the young and remove waste. The foragers cut leaves and carry the fragments back to the nest. The soldiers defend the colony from intruders.

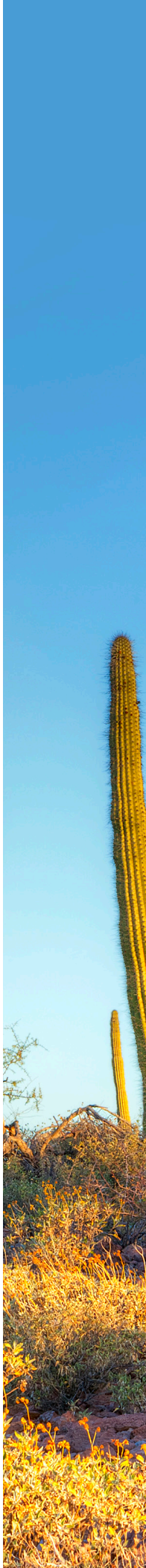
All these castes work together to maintain the colony. While there are many workers, foragers and soldiers, there is only one queen. For the colony to survive, the queen must be kept healthy. She will produce the next generation of reproductive males and females, which will swarm with the coming of the monsoons and leave the nest to start new colonies.

COUNTING ANTS

First noticed at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in the 1940s, leafcutter ants have been surveyed regularly over the last 30 years. The first census took place in 1985, followed by surveys in 1996, 2005-2006 and 2015-2016. The information gathered during these censuses provides scientists with important insights into the biology of *A. mexicana*.

During each census survey, Mintzer and his assistants walked along 11 large arroyo channel systems. These arroyo systems were originally selected in 1985 based on National Park Service aerial imagery that showed good potential desert riparian habitat. In the most recent survey, Mintzer used this aerial imagery and GPS to navigate the arroyos where the ants live. He noted nest locations using GPS and recorded them in the monument's mapping database.

Mintzer determined each colony's age by the condition of the nest. Based on previous surveys, colonies are estimated to have life spans of 10 to 20 years. Younger nests can be identified by the sharply defined mounds of dirt the ants remove while excavating tunnels. Older nests have eroded dirt mounds with large dumps of fungal waste, which resemble dry coffee grounds, outside the entrances.



Research Matters

Ecologists are surveying the effects of climate on leafcutter ants, a species found from El Salvador in western Mexico to **Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument** in southwestern Arizona. Lead researcher Dr. Alex Mintzer and his team have been studying the ants over the past several years in an effort to understand and protect the tiny critters. Their findings have enchanted park staff and visitors alike, turning these ants into representatives that tell us about the world beneath our feet.

This article was originally published [online](#).



Organ Pipe Cactus NM is full of creatures dwelling just out of sight (tonda/iStock).

Even though these ants live at the northern edge of their range, they are thriving. Mintzer counted a whopping 83 nest sites throughout the southern area of Organ Pipe Cactus—a dramatic increase over the 25 active colonies identified in the 2005-2006 survey.

The colonies, while adaptable, do fluctuate in number. The original 1985 survey revealed only 38 active nest sites. The 1996 recensus located 46 nest sites.

ANTS VS. THE WORLD

A. mexicana live in a high traffic area for smugglers, migrants and Border Patrol agents. The ants seek shelter along larger desert washes under ironwoods, mesquites and palo verdes, as do the humans in the area.

Their nests keep the ants relatively safe and undisturbed. “The ant nests are so deeply situated that you’d have to have high explosives and quite a desire to do something to destroy one of them,” Mintzer said. In fact, the underground nests are thought to be as voluminous as an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Although the ants might be immune to human activities, they are affected by climate and predators. Their 2005-2006 slump might have been influenced by climate. In subsequent years a possible decrease in predators, such as lizards and birds, may have allowed the ants to flourish.

Research findings suggest that climate, including precipitation levels and patterns, is the determining factor in the increase (or decrease) of *A. Mexicana* nesting sites. “Like most desert organisms, they don’t reproduce well every year,” Mintzer said. “They wait for the good years, and then a lot of reproduction happens, and in many years their reproduction is probably mediocre.”

In these years with heavy monsoon storms, the winged adults (alates) emerge en masse from the nest entrances, forming giant swarms in the early morning. The heavy rains signal that it is the right time for the winged ants to leave their nest to search for other winged ants. These swarms of reproductive males and females hope to encounter other individuals from unrelated colonies with which to mate.

The reproductive females, if successful, will mate and find a suitable location under trees and shrubs to dig burrows and become foundress queens of their own new colonies. The males die shortly after they (hopefully) mate.

In recent years the ants have had great reproductive success because of good monsoon seasons. “The population is in great shape right now,” Mintzer said. But “if climate change accelerates and you get the extended droughts of the sort that were thought to drive the Anasazi out of the pueblos, then the forecast for the ants becomes grim.”

ATTA MEXICANA AS AMBASSADORS

Mintzer is bringing attention to the leafcutter ants by sharing his research findings with the staff at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. In fact, interpreter Sardius Stalker didn’t have a clue about *Atta mexicana* until he met Mintzer’s research team. “Their caring about what it is they’re studying comes over to us, and we get to share that [with the public],” Stalker said.

Observing *A. Mexicana* might even change some people’s minds about ants. “My philosophy on any ant was ‘These darn ants,’” said Stalker, stomping his foot on the ground. “Then I met these researchers and I met *Atta mexicana*, and I suddenly became fascinated with ants. They are neat creatures. These guys are peaceful farmers.... If you accidentally step on and kill a few, they don’t swarm and attack you. They keep on workin’.”

Visitors are captivated by the ants. “We discovered a pathway that they created where they were foraging,” Stalker said. “Suddenly I had people my age running around like 8- to 10-year-olds looking for ants.”

If the climate changes and dry conditions persist, however, future visitors to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument might miss out on observing a fascinating part of the Sonoran Desert.

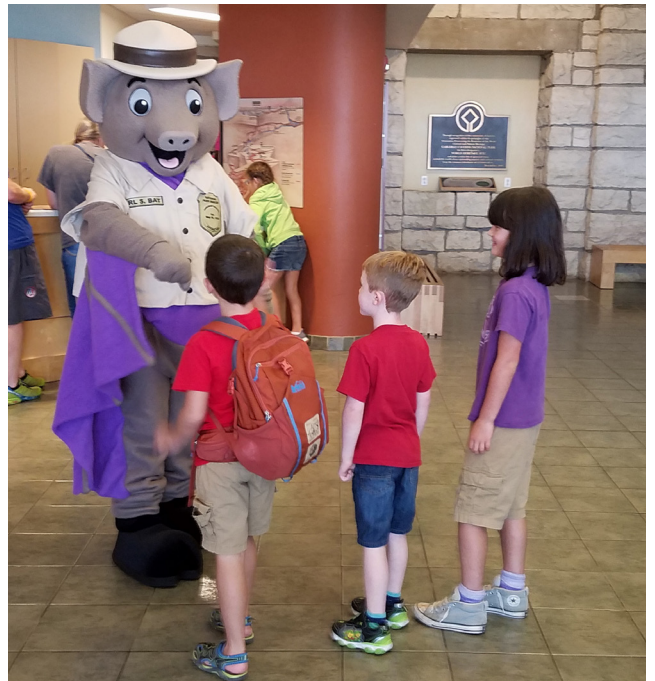
People & Happenings

Animated Ambassadors

While it may be impossible for national parks to have a real saguaro or ground squirrel dancing outside the visitor center, many parks have enlisted the services of the next best thing: mascots. These goodwill ambassadors are perfect for spreading the NPS message to young explorers, giving them a friendly (and often furry) face to associate with their national park experience. In addition to being great with kids, the mascots represent an essential part of the park's ecosystem and emphasize the importance of outdoor safety.

Sunny the Saguaro stands taller than most humans, but his smiling face and replica ranger hat and badge make him one of the least prickly cacti in Arizona. Representing the desert giants protected at **Saguaro National Park**, Sunny teaches kids about the park at outreach events and in the park's Junior Ranger Activity Booklet, where he goes on adventures in the desert with his friends Thelma the Tortoise and Harry the Javelina. Sunny even attended WNPA's The National Park Experience Pavilion at the 2019 Tucson Festival of Books, where he engaged in a dance-off with **Tumacácori National Historical Park's** goodwill ambassador, Pancho the vermilion flycatcher. Both participants showed that national parks give people, animals, and cacti a lot to dance about!

Just like their human friends, these park ambassadors benefit from some rest and relaxation. To help get him ready for upcoming outreach events, **Carlsbad Caverns National Park's** mascot was treated to a makeover this summer. Thanks to support from WNPA, Carl S. Bat has a new look to show off at events and programs. Carl is a Brazilian free-tailed bat—one of 17 different bat species that make Carlsbad Caverns NP their home during summer months. Luckily Carl is available for park and community events year-round; he even stopped by Meet the Teacher



Top: Carl S. Bat greets visitors at Carlsbad Caverns NP and shows off his new look (courtesy of [@wnpa_cave](#) via Instagram).
Bottom: Sunny the Saguaro and Pancho the vermilion flycatcher get ready to dance at the 2019 Tucson Festival of Books.

nights at schools in nearby Carlsbad, New Mexico. Be sure to look for this winged friend in the park's visitor center and ask him to share a selfie. Tag the park using [#CarlsbadCaverns](#) to let Carl know how much you like his new look!

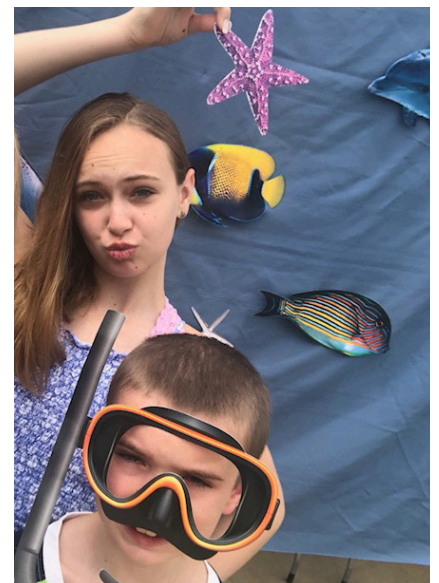
As you're travelling to national parks, don't forget to seek out these animated envoys. We've heard that G. Lupe Ringtail from **Guadalupe Mountains National Park** is very lively during the day, unlike their nocturnal family members, and Chami the ground squirrel from **Chamizal National Memorial** really knows her stuff! Don't worry about keeping a safe distance from these critters; they're approachable and—if you ask, of course—very huggable.



Channel Islands National Park, Second Edition Book Launch Goes Swimmingly

WNPA and **Channel Islands National Park** celebrated the launch of [Channel Islands National Park, Second Edition](#) in July! The National Parks Store in Tucson, Arizona, and the Channel Islands NP Visitor Center in Ventura, California, hosted simultaneous launch parties to share the joy of this new park book. Visitors at both locations watched the official park film, *Channel Islands National Park: Treasure in the Sea*, and attended presentations about the history of and recreational opportunities at the park. Rob Arnberger, the first chief ranger at Channel Islands NP, discussed his time at the park at The National Parks Store, while Ranger Drew explored recreational opportunities in the park at Channel Islands NP; the presentations were livestreamed so they could be enjoyed by attendees at both locations. The National Parks Store also had coloring sheets and pipe cleaner crafts featuring the park's diverse wildlife, helping kids of all ages learn about this remote park.

While Tucson attendees couldn't feel the sea breeze like those in Ventura, the event offered an opportunity for Arizona residents to learn about the distant park without taking a road trip. This event connected attendees to national parks in a new way and celebrated a joint achievement, both of which were made possible through the partnership between WNPA and Channel Islands NP.



Counter clockwise from top: Channel Islands National Park, Second Edition; Rob Arnberger, the first chief ranger at Channel Islands NP, was one of the event's featured presenters; kids swam in the sea-fie booth at The National Parks Store in Tucson, Arizona.

In the Parks

B.A.R.K. in the Park!

Pecos National Historical Park officially launched their [B.A.R.K. Ranger](#) program with a fun event for furry friends and their owners on July 7. B.A.R.K. Ranger is part of the [Healthy Parks Healthy People](#) initiative and promotes safe and respectful practices for dogs—and their owners—in national parks. To officially become a B.A.R.K. Ranger, owners must take the pledge to:

- B**ag your pet's waste
- A**lways leash your pet
- R**espect wildlife
- K**now where you can go



Fifty-two dogs were sworn in as B.A.R.K. Rangers during the event. Pecos NHP partnered with [Three Dog Bakery](#), a nearby dog treat bakery, to reward the new rangers with biscuits. Both two-legged and four-legged attendees had a paw-fect time.

WNPA is proud to work with partner parks like Pecos NHP to help fund educational events like this B.A.R.K. Ranger celebration. Your dog can become a B.A.R.K. Ranger at Pecos NHP or several other NPS sites (just make sure the park is dog-friendly before you go). Ask a ranger in the visitor center if your pup can raise a paw and take the oath. Your canine companion can proudly wear their B.A.R.K. Ranger badge on their collar and have a tail-wagging good time in national parks!





Fire officials survey the effects of the Carr Fire at Whiskeytown NRA (courtesy of NPS/V. Stauffenberg).

Whiskeytown's Recovery

The Carr Fire reached **Whiskeytown National Recreation Area** in July 2018 and burned until late August 2018. The blaze forced evacuations of the park and surrounding areas and destroyed much of the park's habitats, displacing wildlife. Portions of the park are now open to the public, but the full recovery will take years. Thankfully friends of Whiskeytown NRA have stepped up to aid in the park's recovery.

In August 2018 WNPA supported Robert Decker, the artist behind [National Park Posters](#), in launching "The Whiskeytown Challenge" to support the restoration of the park. Decker created a Whiskeytown NRA poster and committed 25 percent of proceeds from its sales to the park; by the end of the challenge he donated \$1,040. In February 2019 WNPA partnered with vendor [Wild Tribute](#) to facilitate a donation of \$5,000 to the park using their grant program [4 the Parks](#). The park is using part of these funds to repair waysides, park signage, and more, making the park safer and more enjoyable for visitors in the wake of the destruction caused by the Carr Fire. These projects will improve the areas open to the public and expedite the reopening of the rest of the park.

Wild Tribute has been a WNPA partner vendor for the last year, working to develop and produce custom designs and products for national parks, and Whiskeytown NRA continues to partner with Decker through his artwork. Thank you, Wild Tribute and Robert Decker, for stepping up to help a park in need!

Shell-ebrating the Turtle Team

For 40 years the [Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery](#) at **Padre Island National Seashore** has studied and protected the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle. It is the only division of its kind in the National Park System, and it utilizes a volunteer Turtle Team to patrol beaches for nests, find stranded turtles, teach visitors about sea turtle conservation, and assist with hatchling releases. This summer 158 volunteers assisted with 24 hatchling releases. Now that's a reason to shell-ebrate!

Padre Island NS and WNPA honored the volunteers for all of their hard work and for continuing the legacy of sea turtle conservation efforts at the park. WNPA helped fund an end-of-summer celebration for 65 volunteers and their families with refreshments, presentations by NPS staff, and recognition for the volunteers who dedicated their summer to helping the Kemp's ridley sea turtles. Thank you, Turtle Team!



If you aren't about to visit Padre Island NS, don't flip out! You can still turtle-y support sea turtle recovery by checking out WNPA's exclusive [Kemp's ridley sea turtle collection](#). Every purchase you make from WNPA helps protect parks and the creatures that live in them.

Left: Volunteers pose for a picture at Padre Island NS. Right: Hatchling Kemp's ridley sea turtles crawl toward the sea (courtesy of NPS).



New & Notable Releases

Love + Protect Your Parks

These products feature the exclusive design of WNPA's [Love + Protect campaign](#), launched after the 2018–2019 government shutdown as a reminder that national parks protect our nation's culture, nature, and history, and we must protect them in return. Show your love for national parks with these products—your purchases support parks!

Camper Mug

WNPA partnered with Deneen Pottery to bring you another amazing mug for your collection! This custom Love + Protect mug is perfect for your morning coffee, cocoa, or tea or as a holiday gift. Bring it home at [store.wnpa.org](#).



Insulated Water Bottle

Show your love for national parks with a custom water bottle! Choose a 17-ounce insulated aluminum bottle or a 24-ounce insulated plastic CamelBak to keep you hydrated on your next national park adventure. Get it at [store.wnpa.org](#).

Sticker

Stick your love for parks anywhere! This die-cut laminated vinyl sticker features the exclusive Love + Protect design. Order at [store.wnpa.org](#).



Focus On

Your Parks Still Need You!

WNPA has been a nonprofit education partner of the NPS for over 80 years, helping enhance the visitor experience and create new advocates for our partner parks. In just the last year, WNPA:

- funded 10 research grants for projects used to guide preservation efforts in national parks.
- developed and produced 35,000 Junior Ranger publications and products to connect younger audiences to our parks in meaningful ways.
- created hundreds of new products to celebrate and educate park visitors about our more than 70 partner parks, including exclusive products to help **Golden Spike National Historical Park** celebrate the 150th anniversary of the transcontinental railroad.

Those are just some of the things WNPA does to preserve and protect your parks, but we can't do any of that without you. National park and public land advocates like you, through your [donations](#), purchases in [our stores](#) or [online](#), [memberships](#), and [sharing our message](#), help support WNPA's mission.

Every contribution you give, every social media post you share, and every visit to a park you make gets us one step closer to increasing education, research, and community engagement in national parks. Will you help us fulfill our mission? Even a gift of **\$25** will ensure your national parks are increasingly valued by all.

WNPA has made the national park experience possible for everyone for over 80 years, and we want to continue that legacy—but we need your help. Become a member today at [wnpa.org](#), make a donation at [wnpa.org/donate](#), or shop online at [store.wnpa.org](#). Every dollar you give helps us love and protect your national parks.



Featured Events & Activities

Bandelier Wilderness Day

Sunday, October 20, 11 AM

Bandelier National Monument
Falls Trailhead (near visitor center)
15 Entrance Rd.
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Take a hike with rangers at **Bandelier National Monument** to celebrate the 43rd anniversary of the park's wilderness designation! Nearly 70 percent (23,267 acres) of Bandelier NM's backcountry is included in this designation, which was designed to protect and conserve the wild areas of the park. Registration is required by calling the visitor center at 505-672-3861 x517. For more information, [click here](#).

Fundamentals of Fungi

Saturday, October 26, 9:30 AM–11:30 AM

Big Thicket National Preserve
FM 420 Trailhead (2.5 miles east of visitor center)
6044 FM 420
Kountze, TX 77625

Explore the fungi of **Big Thicket National Preserve** on a hike along the Kirby Nature Trail. This 1.7-mile walk takes you through the park's diverse ecosystem, where you'll see birds, cypress trees, and, of course, mushrooms. For more information, [click here](#).



Creatures of the Night Campfire

Saturday, October 26, 6:15 PM–8:15 PM

John Muir National Historic Site
4202 Alhambra Ave.
Martinez, CA 94553

Enjoy a free campfire program at **John Muir National Historic Site** and learn about nocturnal creatures. The entire family can participate in songs, skits, and more—there will be something for everyone! For more information, [click here](#).



Evening of Lights

Friday, December 6, 6 PM–8 PM

Aztec Ruins National Monument
725 Ruins Rd.
Aztec, NM 87410

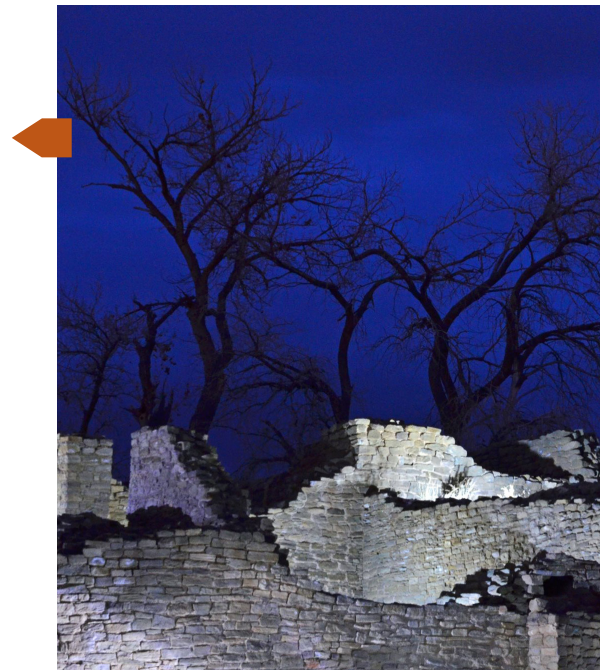
Aztec Ruins National Monument's annual Evening of Lights celebrates the New Mexican tradition of luminarias by illuminating the Great House at Aztec West. This event happens only once a year, so take this opportunity to experience the park in a new light! For more information, [click here](#).

La Fiesta de Tumacácori

Saturday, December 7, 10 AM–5 PM
& Sunday, December 8, 10 AM–4 PM

Tumacácori National Historical Park
1891 East Frontage Rd.
Tumacacori, AZ 85640

Every December **Tumacácori National Historical Park** celebrates the cultural diversity and rich history of the Santa Cruz Valley. La Fiesta de Tumacácori honors these cultural traditions with more than 50 food and craft booths, live entertainment, and children's activities throughout the weekend. The mission grounds and park are open throughout the weekend, and admission is free. For more information, [click here](#).



FEE-FREE DAY

Monday, November 11

Enjoy fee-free entrance to all
NPS sites in honor of Veterans Day!

For more events at national parks near you, check out their websites!

Arizona

[Canyon de Chelly National Monument](#)
[Casa Grande Ruins National Monument](#)
[Chiricahua National Monument](#)
[Coronado National Memorial](#)
[Fort Bowie National Historic Site](#)
[Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site](#)
[Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
[Montezuma Castle National Monument](#)
[Navajo National Monument](#)
[Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#)
[Saguaro National Park](#)
[Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument](#)
[The National Parks Store](#)
[Tonto National Monument](#)
[Tumacácori National Historical Park](#)
[Tuzigoot National Monument](#)
[Walnut Canyon National Monument](#)
[Wupatki National Monument](#)

California

[Channel Islands National Park](#)
[Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site](#)
[John Muir National Historic Site](#)
[Mojave National Preserve](#)
[Pinnacles National Park](#)
[Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial](#)
[San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park](#)
[Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#)
[Whiskeytown National Recreation Area](#)

Colorado

[Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site](#)
[Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
[Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
[Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve](#)
[Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site](#)

Kansas

[Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site](#)
[Fort Larned National Historic Site](#)
[Fort Scott National Historic Site](#)
[Nicodemus National Historic Site](#)

Montana & Wyoming

[Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
[Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument](#)

Nevada

[Great Basin National Park](#)
[Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)

New Mexico

[Aztec Ruins National Monument](#)
[Bandelier National Monument](#)
[Capulin Volcano National Monument](#)
[Carlsbad Caverns National Park](#)
[Chaco Culture National Historical Park](#)
[El Malpais National Monument](#)
[El Morro National Monument](#)
[Fort Union National Monument](#)
[Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument](#)
[Pecos National Historical Park](#)
[Petroglyph National Monument](#)
[Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument](#)
[White Sands National Monument](#)

Oklahoma

[Chickasaw National Recreation Area](#)
[Washita Battlefield National Historic Site](#)

Texas

[Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument](#)
[Big Thicket National Preserve](#)
[Chamizal National Memorial](#)
[Fort Davis National Historic Site](#)
[Guadalupe Mountains National Park](#)
[Lake Meredith National Recreation Area](#)
[Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park](#)
[Padre Island National Seashore](#)
[Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park](#)
[San Antonio Missions National Historical Park](#)

Utah

[Golden Spike National Historical Park](#)
[Timpanogos Cave National Monument](#)

Trails

[Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail](#)
[Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail](#)
[Santa Fe National Historic Trail](#)
[Trail of Tears National Historic Trail](#)



From left: Kids visit the NASA-themed Junior Ranger booth; a guest looks through a solar telescope; a park ranger adjusts a telescope so visitors can view the sky (all photos courtesy of NPS).

Kids in Parks

Kids of all ages explored the wonders of outer space at **White Sands National Monument**'s celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing this summer. More than 120 visitors participated in the festivities, which included ranger talks and a special NASA-themed Junior Ranger booth.

"Solar telescope viewing was a hit with all ages," said Chief of Interpretation Kelly Carroll. Children used highly advanced telescopes funded by WNPA for solar viewing during the day and to take a peek at Jupiter and its moons after dark. Kids even built paper rockets and blew into straws to send the rockets flying toward the moon.

WNPA also supported the two screenings of the new award-winning documentary *Apollo 11*, which included never-before-seen footage from NASA.

"The movie had a personal effect on a few viewers," said Carroll. "I saw multiple people tearing up with remembering this historical event."

The importance of this momentous day in history was passed on to future generations through this educational, fun event made possible by WNPA. We are not shooting for the moon when we say at least one new park advocate was created at this event. One small event, one big memory for kids to keep with them forever!

You can help support great events like this in our national parks.

Click here to learn how!

**Western National Parks
Association is a nonprofit
education partner of
the National Park Service.
We support parks across the
West, developing products,
services, and programs
that enhance the visitor
experience, understanding,
and appreciation of
national parks.**

Your purchases support parks.

www.wnpa.org

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National Parks
Association**

